

**The Oklahoma Mentoring Children
of Incarcerated Parents Program
Annual Report
Calendar Year 2018**

**Submitted by
The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth
and
The Children of Incarcerated Parents Committee**



This *Oklahoma Mentoring Children of Incarcerated Parents Program Annual Report for 2018* is submitted in order to comply with Title 10A O.S. §2-10-103. Special thanks to the Children of Incarcerated Parents Committee. Members of this committee have voluntarily continued the work of the statutorily-created Task Force whose work formally ended February 1, 2012. They continue to serve this special and vulnerable population of children as well as provide assistance with this report.

Committee Members:

Co-Chair: Dr. David McLeod, Director of Knee Center for Strong Families, Assistant Professor of Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work, and Affiliate Faculty of Women's & Gender Studies Center for Social Justice

Co-Chair: The Honorable April Sellers White, retired judge of Creek County; Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries

Nate Brown, Director of Program Services, Oklahoma Department of Corrections

Tamara Bryan, Counselor, Pryor Public Schools

Jaime Burns, Associate Professor, University of Central Oklahoma School of Criminal Justice

Kay Floyd, Director, Head Start State Collaboration Office, Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agency

Cheri Fuller, Executive Director of the OK Messages Project

Dr. Alesha Lilly, Program Coordinator, Child Guidance Program, the Oklahoma State Department of Health

Elizabeth Maier, Professor, University of Central Oklahoma School of Criminal Justice

Jena Moore, Women's Justice Team Program Manager, Family and Children Services

Mimi Tarrasch, Executive Director, Family and Children Services at Women in Recovery

Dr. Ron Thrasher, Professor of Forensic Sciences & Director of the Forensic Psychology Program, Oklahoma State University

Amanda McClain, Community-Based Programs Administrator, Office of Juvenile Affairs

MeKay Reaves, Grant Coordinator, Child Guidance Services, Oklahoma State Department of Health

Renee Lanier, Assistant Regional Supervisor, Probation and Parole, Oklahoma Department of Corrections

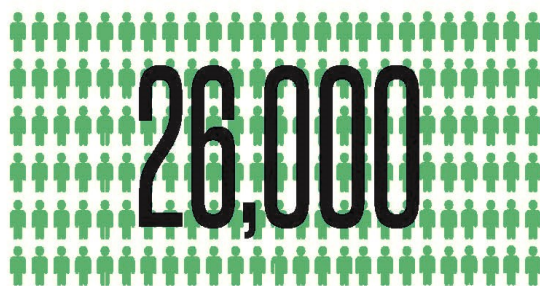
Patricia Valera, Program Field Representative, Child Protection Services, Oklahoma Department of Human Services

Lauren Broyles, State Juvenile Justice Specialist, Office of Juvenile Affairs

Particular thanks go to the following individuals of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma for providing data, text and graphics for this report: **Melissa Ramirez**, Chief Executive Officer; **Hailey Chenevert**, Grant Writer & Coordinator; **Tim Gowin**, Vice President of Program Operations; and **Marie Quinten**, Communications and Marketing Director.

And lastly, thank you to **Cherra Taylor** of the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth for providing ongoing staff support to the Committee.

OKLAHOMA'S CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS (CIP)



Number of CIP on an given day
in Oklahoma



CIP not in the custody of OK
child protective services or
otherwise formally identified



CIP are more 70% more likely
to end up incarcerated

**Current funding levels are only enough to support
about 60 out of 26,000 CIP per day through programs like**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma - Serve children of incarcerated parents through their Amachi program by matching them with a one-to-one lifelong mentor.

With additonal funding, we could support more programs like

ReMerge and Women In Recovery

Diversion programs for
mothers to remain in
the community and
avoid prison.

Girl Scouts of Eastern OK Beyond Bars Program

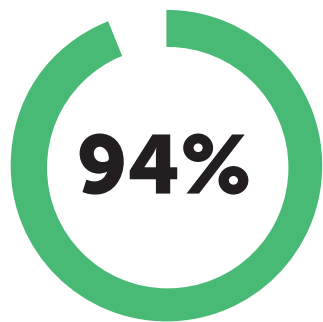
Enables children of incarcerated
mothers to foster healthy, lasting
relationships.

Oklahoma Messages

Provides CIP with video
messages of their
parent reading books
to them.



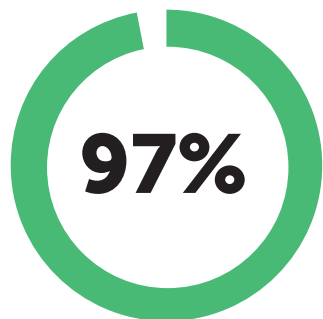
OF LITTLES REPORT
MAINTAINED OR INCREASED
**ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE**



OF LITTLES MAINTAINED OR
INCREASED THEIR ABILITY
**TO AVOID
DELINQUENCY**



OF LITTLES MAINTAINED
OR INCREASED THEIR
SENSE OF FUTURE



OF LITTLES REPORT
MAINTAINED OR INCREASED
SELF-CONFIDENCE



Big Brothers Big Sisters.[®]

OF OKLAHOMA

REPORT ON MATCHES FUNDED BY OKLAHOMA COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

BELOW INFORMATION REFLECTS ONLY THE 138 MATCHES FUNDED
THROUGH OCCY SINCE JULY 1, 2015

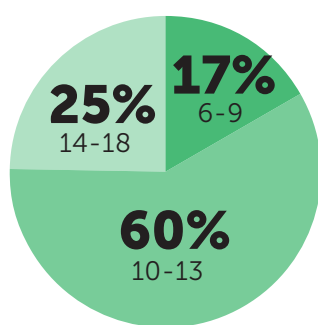
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma's evidence-based mentoring programs are designed to create positive, measureable outcomes for youth, including educational success, avoidance of risky behaviors, higher aspirations, greater confidence and better relationships. We match children (we call them Littles) with caring adult role models (we call them Bigs). Our Bigs share experiences with our Littles that expand their world in new ways.

138 LITTLES OF INCARCERATED
PARENTS MATCHED

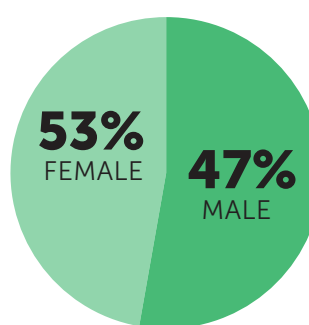


241
WAITING
FOR A
MENTOR

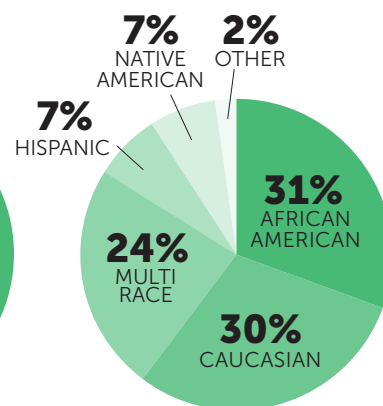
LITTLE DEMOGRAPHICS



AGE



GENDER



RACE

4,500+ MENTOR HOURS
DONATED IN 2018

**“ I WOULDN'T BE THE MAN I AM
TODAY WITHOUT MY BIG BROTHER. ”**

FORMER LITTLE BROTHER ROBERT

The Oklahoma Mentoring Children of Incarcerated Parents Program

During FY 2018, The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY) awarded Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma (BBBSOK) \$55,000 to provide one-to-one mentoring to children of incarcerated parents. Those funds have allowed BBBSOK to provide 41 children with an adult mentor who has committed to meeting with them on a consistent and regular basis for at least one year. OCCY has provided funding to BBBSOK since July 1, 2015. Since that time, BBBSOK has matched 138 children of incarcerated parents with a caring mentor.

The Mission and Program Process of BBBSOK

The Mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better, forever. The goal of Big Brothers Big Sisters has remained the same for more than 100 years – to match one caring, stable, and positive adult role model with one at-risk or high-risk child so the child can experience the consistency and positive influence of a one-to-one relationship with a “Big” (volunteer mentor) who chooses to spend quality time with his or her “Little” (child mentee) on a regular basis.

Our Process



Those interested in being a Big or getting a Big let us know by completing an inquiry. Most start from our website at www.bbbsok.org. We follow up with those individuals to explain the program and ensure compatibility. Then each goes through a personal interview with an Enrollment Specialist. During the interview, both parties share their likes, interests and preferences so we can use that information during the matching process to find a suitable match. During the interview process for potential Bigs, we obtain three references and conduct a thorough criminal history, driving record check and other background checks. Upon completion of all steps, the enrollment specialist creates a portfolio about the Big for approval by our Vice President of Program Operations. Littles are approved based on their understanding of personal safety, age and desired outcomes from the program. Then, the individuals enter our “Ready to be Matched” queue and are considered for matching. When we find a compatible match, the Big and parent or guardian learn about each other from the Enrollment Specialist. If everyone agrees for the match to move forward, a match introduction is scheduled and the Big and Little meet for the first time. After the first meeting, the Big and Little begin their activities (either at school or out in the community). Our staff stay in close contact with the matches through monthly conversations with the Big, Little and parent or guardian. The match support is a critical part of our child safety protocol. Child safety remains our top priority at all stages of the match.

Two Programs for Children of Incarcerated Parents

BBBSOK provides this intervention for these children of incarcerated parents with professionally supported one-to-one mentorships through two avenues:

1. Bigs provide Littles individualized time and attention on a regular basis through activities in the *community*, typically 2-4 times per month for 2-3 hours each time. They develop a trusting, caring relationship that provides an outlet for the Little and a model for handling everyday challenges. Over the course of time, our Littles gain confidence, achieve new skills and competencies, and develop an enhanced capacity to care for others.
2. Bigs offer the same individualized time and attention on a consistent basis, but the venue is the Little's *school*. Bigs and Littles meet weekly during school hours and utilize school resources such as the computer lab, library, gym, classroom or playground. The Big-Little relationship promotes positive school experiences for the child: good attendance, positive peer and adult relationships, and academic achievement. Ideally, matches maintain contact by email, phone, or letters during school breaks, and continue meeting from one year to the next.

OCCY-Funded BBBSOK Matches Demographics

Little Demographics

Gender

- Female: 53%
- Male: 47%

Race

- African American: 31%
- Caucasian: 30%
- Multi-Race: 24%
- Hispanic: 7%
- American Indian: 7%
- Asian: <1%
- Other: <1%

Age

- 6-9: 17%
- 10-13: 60%
- 14-18: 25%

Big Demographics

Gender

- Female: 53%
- Male: 47%

Race

- African American: 10%
- Caucasian: 75%
- Multi-Race: 4%
- Hispanic: 1%
- American Indian: 6%
- Asian: 3%
- Other: 1%

Age

- 19-25: 41% 51-60: 4%
- 26-30: 26% 61-75: 2%
- 31-40: 19%
- 41-50: 8%

Match Length

Of the 138 matches created since funding started, 74 matches remain active today.

- 30 of the 64 closed matches had a party of the match move too far for the match to continue
- The 64 closed matches had an average match length of 1.16 years
- Thirteen of the matches made in 2015-2016 remain open and have an average match length of 2.93 years (and still counting)
- Eighteen of the matches made in 2016-2017 remain open and have an average match length of 1.86 years (and still counting)

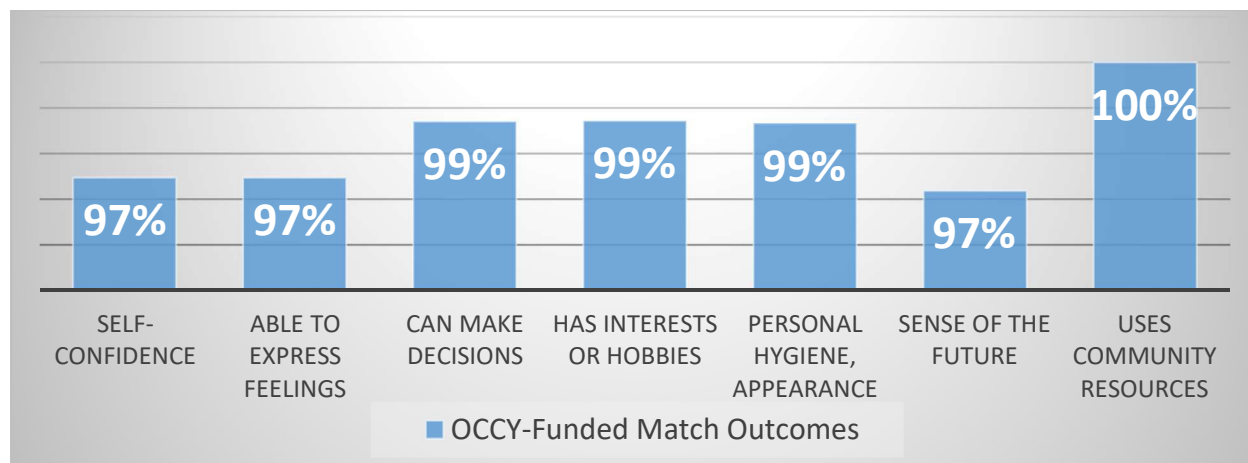
Outcome Data for OCCY-Funded Matches

- 79 OCCY-funded respondents completed the Program Outcome Evaluation Survey. The results are in the below graphs.
- Surveys were completed by the Big and either the parent/guardian (if a Community-Based match) or the teacher/counselor (if a School-Based match).
- Maintained and increased results are included in each category because sometimes the behavior change happens early in the match and is then maintained throughout.
- Surveys were completed between 4/29/2016 to 9/5/17.
- Surveys are issued annually and at the close of the match.

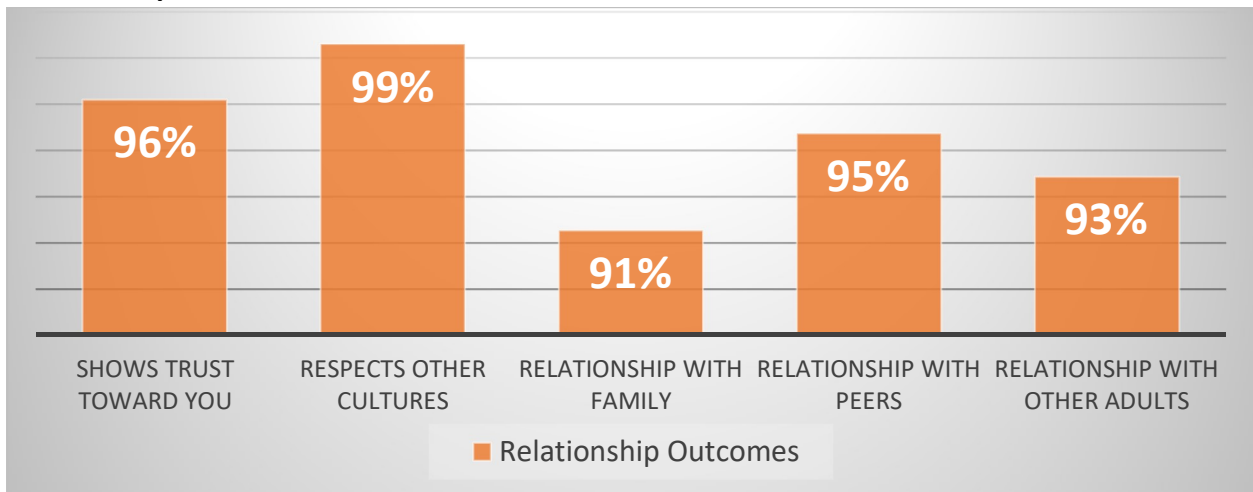
Risky Behavior Outcomes



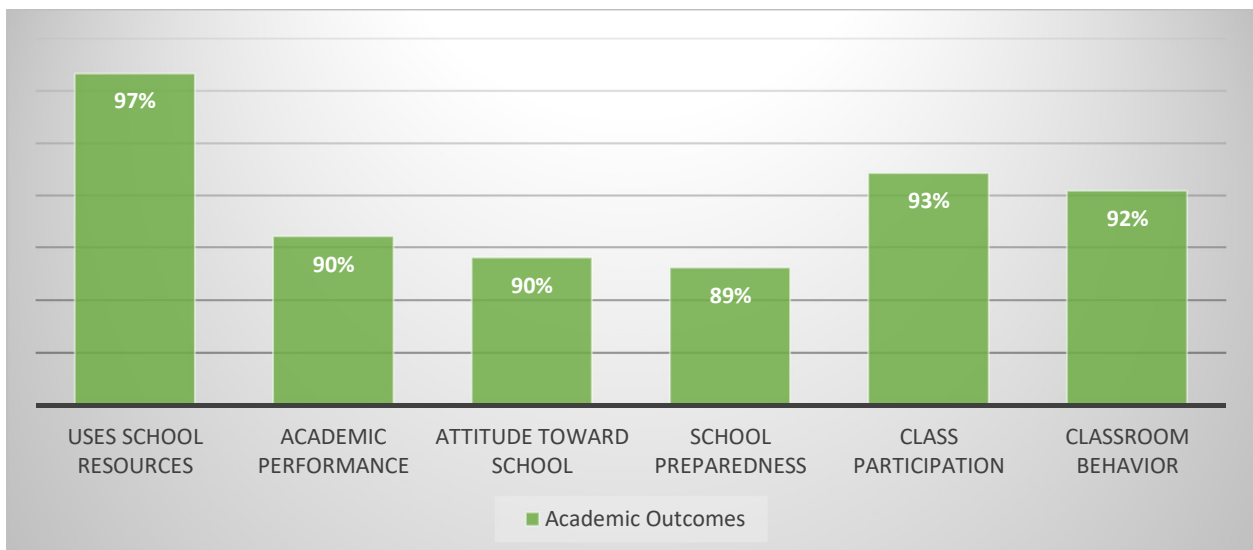
Personal Outcomes



Relationship Outcomes



Academic Outcomes



More Work to Do

As of Dec. 13, 2018, there are 249 children with an incarcerated parent on the BBBSOK Enrollment or Waiting List.

- Eight of those children have been paired with their new Big and are waiting to be introduced.
- 142 of those children are on the BBBSOK "Ready to Be Matched" list.
- 99 of those children are still going through the enrollment process.

Oklahomans in the Program

Meet Some of the Bigs and Littles Funded by OCCY

Big Brother Justin and Little Brother Michael

Matched July 2015 in Tulsa

Michael's father has been in and out of jail. At the time of enrollment in 2015, Michael was facing trauma due to life events and his father being taken away so he was very emotional, angry, and overly attached to his mother. Both Michael and Justin love sports, love to be outside, love to build things, and want to experience new things in the city which made them a great pair.



Earlier this year, Michael and his mother found themselves suddenly homeless and needed help finding emergency housing. Michael's mother turned to Big Brother Justin for advice and help finding resources. Justin quickly contacted his Match Support Specialist for counsel and was able to help get Michael and his mom in housing.



Justin and Michael attended the back-to-school shopping event at JC Penney sponsored by the local Kiwanis Club. For his commitment to Michael, Justin was named Big Brother of the Year for the state of Oklahoma in 2018. Michael and his mom joined BBBS staff to surprise Justin with the news.

Big Sister Ariel and Little Sister Janiyah

Match Date July 6, 2016, in Tulsa

Janiyah's guardian signed her up for a Big Sister to help her foster positive friendships and focus on her education. Janiyah started the program when she was 13 years old. When Janiyah's aunt brought her into the BBBSOK office, Janiyah was an intelligent kid who was beginning to make dubious choices regarding friendships and priorities. Interviews with Janiyah's aunt Teshia revealed that while Janiyah had always been gifted and determined to go to college, her friends were questionable and encouraged Janiyah to be disrespectful, skip school and prioritize fitting in over self-improvement.



Just a little over two months after Teshia inquired about enrolling Janiyah in the program, Janiyah was meeting her new Big Sister Ariel, an ORU graduate and DHS worker passionate about giving back and

supporting the children of our community. Ariel and Janiyah just celebrated their two-year match anniversary in July. These two years have been years of great improvement for Janiyah, who is getting ready for her 16th birthday, learning to drive, and preparing to start a Law & Criminal Justice program at Tulsa Technology Center.

Ariel, Teshia, and Janiyah all proudly boast that Janiyah is choosing better friends, prioritizing her academics, and has her heart set on becoming a lawyer. Ariel has supported Janiyah's academic involvement and has even taken her on a tour of her alma mater, ORU. This year, Ariel hopes to take Janiyah to more activities in academic settings and further tap into Janiyah's love of learning and justice. Beyond the mentorship that Ariel has provided for Janiyah, Ariel has also become a great friend. Janiyah says that her favorite thing about her Big Sister is that when Janiyah comes to her with her problems, Ariel offers honest advice and a shoulder to lean on, but ultimately encourages Janiyah to make her own decision and think through it herself. Janiyah has grown into a responsible, independent, and driven young lady with the support provided by her aunt Teshia and her Big Sister Ariel.



Big Sister Melissa and Little Sister Megan

Matched August 28, 2017, in Bartlesville

Former foster mom Melissa wanted to be a Big Sister to help a young girl succeed. Eleven-year-old Megan lives with her mom and they have a close relationship. But Megan's mom felt that Megan needed more. Megan deals with challenges like ADHD, mood swings and impulse control. She visits the school counselor often. She also needed help with social skills. Megan's mom noticed significant improvements in Megan's impulse control. So much so that she asked Big Sister Melissa to share her techniques, so mom could practice those at home, too.

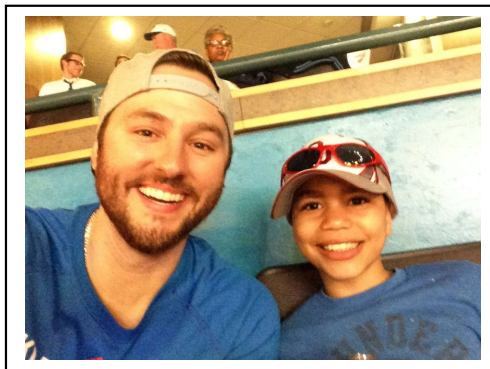
Melissa and Megan meet weekly and enjoy visiting the library, looking up fun facts, playing Minecraft and board games and baking. Megan has learned to control her sudden upsets, which has allowed the match to visit more public settings like the museum, zoo and local parks. Any time Megan is having a bad day, they do breathing exercises together and think happy thoughts. Soon, Megan regains control.

Mom says that Melissa is a true friend to both Megan and her. Melissa is glad she can use the skills she has learned over the years to help Megan. She enjoys being matched with her and seeing her grow. Megan says that Melissa is "the coolest Big Sister in the world."

Big Brother Ben and Little Brother Joshuaun

Matched October 29, 2015, in Oklahoma City

Joshuaun was seven years old when he was interviewed to become a Little. Maria, Joshuaun's adoptive mother, thought the program would be a good fit for Joshuaun because he lacked a positive male role model in his life. Maria is a single mother and has another adopted son De'Auntre (also matched at BBBS). Maria was Joshuaun's seventh foster care placement by the time he was 22 months old. Joshuaun's biological parents have been



incarcerated multiple times for drug-related charges. Joshuaun also has a biological sister that sexually abused him. Joshuaun does not have any contact with his biological parents or sister. On October 29, 2015, Joshuaun was matched with his Big Brother Ben. The two enjoy playing and watching sports, eating, reading books at the library, watching movies, playing at Main Event Entertainment, bowling, going to the park and visiting the science museum and zoo. One of Joshuaun's favorite activities has been going to Thunder basketball games. Ben helped Joshuaun gain confidence and understand the importance of school. The match continues to meet with one another despite many changes in each of their lives. Since the match introduction, Ben got married, has had a baby and career change. Joshuaun has moved a few times throughout OKC and changed schools a number of times. The match is coming up on their three-year anniversary. Despite all of the changes, Ben has remained a constant in Joshuaun's life.



Big Brother Kelly and Little Brother Bryant

Matched August 10, 2017, in Ponca City Bryant lives with his mother and older sister. They have a good relationship, but sometime get into arguments. Bryant is a shy, smart teenager who has compassion for others but struggles with anger issues. Bryant's mother wanted a Big Brother so Bryant could have a good role model while his father is in prison. She also hoped a Big Brother would help him academically, specifically with science, and teach him how to manage his anger.

Bryant and Kelly just had their one-year match anniversary and both enthusiastically said, "YES!" To continuing the match. Bryant's relationship with Kelly is strong, and although Bryant has been slow to warm up during the first year of their match, he loves having his Big Brother to talk to about sports, family and school. Bryant's older sister left for college this fall and since she is the only driver in the family due to their mother's medical condition, Kelly is concerned about the family's plan until Bryant gets his license in a few years. Kelly has been looking for alternative resources and transportation options for Bryant and his mother, such as bus routes and services for people with disabilities.

Big Sister Sinqanice and Little Sister Katya

Matched October 11, 2017, in Stillwater

Katya's grandma enrolled her with Big Brothers Big Sisters because she thought Katya needed another girl to spend one-on-one time with; Katya has two brothers at home. Katya has autism, ADHD, a hearing impairment and dyslexia. Finding her the perfect Big took some time. After waiting almost a year, Katya finally met her Big Sister Sinqanice (Sinq).

Katya lives with her grandma because her father is deceased and her mom lost custody because of a history of drug use. Katya's mother is clean now, and does have supervised visitation with Katya's grandma present. Grandma thought that having an outlet outside of the family to help her navigate the reintegration with her mother would be good for Katya.



Katya and Sinq have met regularly since being matched. They have attended match activities such as the BBBS Christmas Party, OSU basketball and football games. They also play basketball and swim at the YMCA, skate at the local Roller Dome, bowl, go to the movies, and go to birthday parties together. Even though they have only been matched for eight months, Katya seems to have a more "level" mood, according to her grandma. Sinq said that they always have a good time, and even though they do not have too many "deep" conversations yet (because Katya is still young and intellectually delayed), she has noticed that Katya opens up to her when she is feeling "down." One time, Katya was not feeling well when Sinq came to pick her up, but she still wanted to spend time with her Big, so they just sat on the front porch and talked for an hour. Katya looks forward to seeing her Big Sister, and her grandma thinks this helps her keep a positive mood throughout the week.



The Oklahoma Messages Project

In addition to the work of BBBSOK, The Oklahoma Messages Project, provided a proven, award-winning literacy and prevention program that improves the lives of children of incarcerated parents. Founded in 2011, Project staff and volunteers film incarcerated parents reading to their children and share a positive message that addresses the major emotional issues their children face. They then burn the film to a DVD and send the DVD along with the book that was read to their children every Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day. In 2018, almost 2,000 children under the age of 18 received DVD messages and bedtime stories to read along with their parents. These children live in 67 counties with the highest number in the following: Oklahoma County, Tulsa, Muskogee, Cleveland, and Seminole County.

The Oklahoma Messages Project has great partnerships across the state, including impactful partnerships with tribal nations. Because of the Chickasaw Nation's generous financial support, OK Messages Project served 560 Native American children throughout the state whose parents are in prison.